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American Samoa

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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Note: The information contained in the present working paper has been derived from public sources, including those of the territorial Government, and from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the administering Power under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations. Information was transmitted by the administering Power on 13 January 2016. Further details are contained in previous working papers, available from www.un.org/en/decolonization/workingpapers.shtml.

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The Territory at a glance

Territory: American Samoa is a Non-Self-Governing Territory under the Charter of the United Nations. It is an unincorporated and unorganized territory of the United States of America, administered by the Office of Insular Affairs of the United States Department of the Interior.

Representative of administering Power: United States Department of the Interior, which has a representative resident on the ground[a]

Geography: Located in the South Pacific, approximately 3,700 km south-west of Hawaii and 4,350 km north-east of Australia. The Territory consists of seven islands: Tutuila and Aunuu, in addition to Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u (known as the Manu'a Islands) and the two coral atolls of Swains and Rose.

Land area: 200 km²

Exclusive economic zone: 404,391 km²

Population: 55,170 (2013 estimate)

Life expectancy at birth: 75.9 years (women); 69.3 years (men)

Ethnic composition: Native Pacific Islander (92.6 per cent); Asian (3.6 per cent); white (0.9 per cent); other ethnic origin (2.9 per cent)

Languages: English, Samoan

Seat of Government: Fagatogo

Head of territorial Government: Governor Lolo Letalu Matalasi Moliga

Main political parties: Democrat, Republican

Elections: The most recent elections were held in November 2014 to elect the delegate to the United States House of Representatives and 20 members of the American Samoa House of Representatives. The next elections are due to be held in November 2016 for the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, the delegate to the United States House of Representatives and 20 members of the American Samoa House of Representatives.

Legislature: Fono (bicameral legislative assembly)

Gross domestic product per capita: $11,777 (2008 chained dollars; 2014 estimate)

Economy: Fishing and agriculture

Unemployment rate: 9.2 per cent (2012 estimate)

Monetary unit: United States dollar

Brief history: It is believed that the Samoan archipelago was settled some 3,000 years ago by people migrating from South-East Asia. The Dutch were the first Europeans to reach the islands, in 1722. The 1899 Treaty of Berlin, also known as the Anglo-German Samoa Convention, apportioned to the United States the eastern islands of the Samoan archipelago.

[a] Secretary's Order 2657 of 29 August 1951 and Secretary's Order 3009, as amended, of 3 November 1977, set forth the extent and nature of the authority of the Government of American Samoa and the manner in which the authority is to be exercised (see the Electronic Library of Interior Policies, United States Department of the Interior).

I. Constitutional, legal and political issues

1. By the late 1800s, internal strife among the chiefs of the islands of the Samoan archipelago and struggles among the colonial Powers of Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America led to a period of instability. Deeds ceding the islands to the United States from the early 1900s were accepted by legislation of the United States Congress on 20 February 1929. Pursuant to that legislation, American Samoans were given the status of United States nationals. The legislation provided for an American Samoan Government with all civil, judicial and military powers to be vested in a designee of the President of the United States. Given that the interest of the United States in the area had been mainly for military purposes, the Territory was placed under the jurisdiction of the United States Navy. On 29 June 1951, through Executive Order 10264 of the President of the United States administrative responsibility for the Territory was transferred to the Department of the Interior.

2. American Samoa is an unincorporated and unorganized territory under United States law. Not all provisions of the Constitution of the United States or of United States law apply. Residents of American Samoa are not United States citizens but United States nationals who can freely enter, work or reside anywhere they choose in the United States. Children born in the Territory to foreign parents become citizens of either the mother's or the father's country of origin, not United States nationals. American Samoans may not vote in the general elections of the United States but are permitted to participate in presidential primaries and caucuses.

3. The Constitution of the Territory provides for separate executive and legislative branches and an independent judiciary. The executive branch comprises a governor and a lieutenant governor elected for four-year terms by universal adult suffrage. All American Samoans over 18 years of age are eligible to vote. The Governor is responsible for executing both American Samoan and United States laws and has veto power with regard to legislation passed by the Fono.

4. The Fono is a bicameral legislature, comprising the Senate, 18 members of which are chosen by 14 county village councils, and the House of Representatives, 20 members of which are elected by popular vote, with the other appointed as a non-voting delegate from Swains Island. Only a *matai*, the traditional chief of an *aiga* (an extended family), can become a senator. Senators hold office for four years and representatives for two years. The Fono may pass laws with regard to all local affairs, provided that they are not inconsistent with United States laws in force in the Territory or with United States treaties or international agreements.

5. The judicial system consists of a high court, for which the Chief Justice and the associate justices are appointed by the United States Secretary of the Interior, and the local district and village courts, for which the judges are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Fono. The High Court is separated into appellate, trial, land and titles and family, drug and alcohol divisions. The United States Congress has granted limited federal jurisdiction to the High Court to hear certain cases involving federal statutory issues, such as occupational safety and health administration issues and ship mortgage actions. Other matters of federal law arising in the Territory are adjudicated in the United States district courts, mainly the federal courts in Hawaii and Washington, D.C. Given that American Samoa is not part of a United States federal judicial district or circuit, there are no statutory

provisions for appealing against decisions of the High Court to a federal district court.

6. The 1960 Constitution of American Samoa was revised in 1967 and subsequently amended in 1970 and 1977. Amendments or modifications, as approved by the United States Secretary of the Interior, may be made only by an act of the United States Congress. In 2008, a referendum that would have revised an aspect of the Constitution was narrowly defeated. The June-July 2010 Constitutional Convention proposed amendments or revisions to the Constitution, including those relating to the prohibition of further individualization of communal lands in the Territory, the establishment of an impartial jury in all criminal prosecutions, the enhancement of the Samoan language and culture in the educational system, the management and preservation of the natural resources of the Territory in accordance with local laws and the provision for the impeachment of the leaders of the Territory. In the general election held in November 2010, however, the voters overwhelmingly defeated the proposed changes.

7. In the general election held in November 2012, voters chose a new Governor, independent candidate Lolo Letalu Matalasi Moliga. In November 2014, voters elected 20 members of the American Samoa House of Representatives and the delegate to the United States House of Representatives (see para. 8). A constitutional referendum was held during the November 2014 general election, proposing an amendment to the revised Constitution to allow the Fono to override vetoes by the Governor. Voters rejected the proposal.

8. Since 1981, American Samoa has elected by direct vote a delegate to the United States House of Representatives for a two-year term. The delegate may vote in committees. In the general election held in November 2014, Aumua Amata Radewagen defeated the incumbent, Eni F. H. Faleomavaega, to become the first female delegate of American Samoa to the United States House of Representatives.

9. On 26 June 2013, the United States District Court for the District of Columbia dismissed a lawsuit filed by five non-citizen United States nationals born in American Samoa and the Samoan Federation of America (*Tuaua v. United States*) seeking a declaratory judgement that would assert that the citizenship clause of the Fourteenth Amendment extends to American Samoa. As stated in paragraph 2, American Samoa is an unincorporated territory, meaning that people born there are not conferred birthright citizenship. In 2014, an appeal was filed before the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and oral arguments were presented on 9 February 2015. In June 2015, a three-judge panel of the Court of Appeals held that constitutional citizenship by birth did not apply in the territories and that those born in American Samoa had no claim to birthright citizenship under the citizenship clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. On 20 July 2015, the plaintiffs petitioned for the full Court of Appeals to review the June decision. On 2 October 2015, the Court of Appeals denied the petition and thereby upheld the decision. On 11 December 2015, the plaintiffs filed a motion to the Supreme Court of the United States requesting a 30-day extension to file a petition for a writ of certiorari seeking the Supreme Court's review of the decision by the Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court granted the plaintiffs' motion and their petition for a writ of certiorari was submitted on 1 February 2016. A decision by the Supreme Court on whether it would take up the case would be expected by the end of the current judicial term, in June 2016. The Government of American Samoa

intervened in opposition to the lawsuit, arguing that the citizenship status of the American Samoan people was a matter for the people to resolve through political processes.

10. Addressing the United States House of Representatives on 27 June 2013, the delegate from American Samoa expressed thanks to the District Court for what he termed its well-reasoned opinion and for reaffirming the authority of Congress to grant citizenship to the people of American Samoa. In his view, the decision would allow the people of American Samoa to decide whether they wished to become citizens. In a letter addressed to the territorial Governor and the Fono in April 2013, he had stated that the lawsuit posed a threat to the traditional culture of American Samoa and that it was unknown whether the entire Constitution of the United States would apply to American Samoa if the Court applied the citizenship clause to it. He also said that, if people who were born in American Samoa automatically became United States citizens, the United States would likely take control of the immigration system in American Samoa. He had affirmed that it was important that the people of American Samoa, and not the Court, should decide whether they wished to become United States citizens by birthright.

11. According to the administering Power, the Governor of the Territory submitted his official position on the political status of American Samoa in a document dated 13 June 2013 entitled "Decolonization issue regarding American Samoa", which was forwarded in the same month to the Office of Insular Affairs of the United States Department of the Interior. He noted that American Samoa was not a colony of the United States but rather a territory, a status that had been fashioned voluntarily because of economic overtones. He stated his appreciation for the continued diligence of the United Nations in working to ensure that the administering Powers revisited existing relationships with their territories or insular possessions so that every opportunity was provided for the latter to opt out if they so desired. In his view, the United Nations was genuinely committed to ensuring that the general welfare of such territories was secured through the development of their financial systems, the strengthening of their Governments and the building of self-sustaining economies.

12. The Governor pointed out that the current status of American Samoa provided more self-determining authority to American Samoa to make its own decisions. The prevailing perception that American Samoa was a colony by definition stemmed from the informal character of the relationship with the United States, with the absence of an organic act that formally defined the relationship. In a de facto sense, he said, American Samoa was part of the United States, substantially self-governing and not a colony in any real sense. He noted that American Samoa had freely, through its deeds of cession, bequeathed its sovereignty to the United States; it had not been acquired through any military conquest. Being part of the United States family was really a matter of self-determination.

13. The Governor also noted that, while the federal Government of the United States had lived up to its commitment to American Samoa with regard to the provision of funds, there were current issues decided at the congressional level that had negatively affected the ability of American Samoa to advance its social and economic development prospects. He pointed out, however, that American Samoa had representation in the United States Congress to register its objections to

measures that adversely affected its ability to improve the quality of life in the Territory.

14. The Governor recalled the recommendation made in 2006 by the Future Political Status Study Commission that American Samoa continue as an unorganized and unincorporated territory and that a process of negotiation with the United States Congress for a permanent political status be initiated, in addition to the points forming the basis for such negotiations (see A/AC.109/2008/3). He further expressed his personal preference for the United States Congress, which had the ultimate authority to decide on the type of political status that the United States would have with American Samoa, to relinquish that authority to the people of American Samoa in order to empower them to make the decision that they deemed appropriate.

15. During the Caribbean regional seminar on decolonization held in Nicaragua from 19 to 21 May 2015, the representative of the Governor of American Samoa stated that, while the Territory enjoyed a great deal of self-government, its current legal status was seen as an anachronism that exposed the Territory to situations beyond its control and needed to be remedied. American Samoa continued to get its authority from the President of the United States and the United States Department of the Interior. What was most important to the people of American Samoa were the preservation of its culture and the ability to govern themselves. The Territory did not have appropriate representation in the Government of the United States and was exposed to decisions made by judges and other lawmakers far from the Territory. The Territory was further exposed to coercive taxes, including those that prohibited the ability of American Samoa to use its own resources to better the Territory. Until specific protections were assured, the fact that it lived under the auspices of the United States would make it vulnerable. The United States entered into free trade agreements with many countries that affected American Samoa directly. He expressed the hope that the Territory would soon have a voice in determining the course of its future. On the way forward, he stated that the referendum on a constitutional amendment held in 2014 had sparked a lively public debate among voters and local residents about the political status and future of American Samoa. Although the constitutional amendment had failed, the resulting public discourse had suggested that American Samoa was ready to take the next step in entertaining serious discussion about what its future political status should look like. According to the representative, until the people of American Samoa had exercised their right to determine for themselves their future political status, it was perhaps best that American Samoa remained on the United Nations decolonization list. Lastly, he extended an invitation to the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples from the Governor to visit the Territory.

II. Budget

16. The final version of the budget for fiscal year 2016, which began on 1 October 2015, amounted to $417.85 million, according to media sources. According to the Office of Insular Affairs of the United States Department of the Interior, grant funds are provided each year to American Samoa for the operation of the local government, including the judiciary, to fill the gap between budget needs and local revenues. The Office's 2016 budget request for American Samoa operations is

$22.7 million, with 61.5 per cent allocated to basic operations and 34.7 per cent to the operations of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Tropical Medical Center. According to the Office, the operation grant was maintained at a constant level between 2014 and 2015 in order to promote self-sufficiency, requiring American Samoa to absorb the costs of inflation or costs associated with the growing population. The Office has designated American Samoa as a high-risk grantee in an effort to improve accountability for federal funds. Such designation allows the Office to require grantees to comply with special conditions for future or existing grants. The special conditions may include payment of grant funds on a reimbursable basis; withholding approval to proceed from one project phase to another until the receipt of acceptable evidence of current performance; additional project monitoring; and requiring grantees to obtain technical or management assistance. The high-risk designation will be removed once the Government of American Samoa:

(a) Has completed single audits by the statutory deadline for the two most recent consecutive years, resulting in opinions that are not disclaimed and do not contain qualifications that the Office determines in its reasonable discretion to be material;

(b) Has a balanced budget, as confirmed by independent auditors, for the two most recent consecutive years, without regard for non-recurring windfalls, such as insurance settlements;

(c) Is in substantial compliance with the memorandum of agreement, signed in 2002 between the territorial Government and the Office, and the fiscal reform plan.

III. Economic conditions

A. General

17. As noted in previous working papers, the President of the United States signed the Insular Areas Act into law in 2012, postponing minimum wage increases for 2012, 2013 and 2014. Annual wage increases were to recommence on 30 September 2015 and would continue every three years until all rates reached the federal minimum rate. The wage rates are set for particular industries, not for an employee's particular occupation. The rates are minimum rates; an employer may choose to pay an employee at a rate higher than the rate or rates for its industry.

18. According to the administering Power, Public Law 114-61 was enacted in October 2015, providing an immediate incremental increase of $0.40 per hour in the transitional minimum wage for each industry in American Samoa, with additional increases occurring every three years on 30 September until the minimum wage is equal to that in the United States. Public Law 114-61 also changed the deadline for the United States Government Accountability Office report assessing the impact of minimum wage increases in American Samoa to 1 April 2017, with a subsequent report due by 1 April 2020. The law also directed the Office to report on alternative mechanisms to increase the minimum wage in American Samoa in order to keep pace with the cost of living and eventually equal the minimum wage in the United States.

19. In March 2014, the United States Government Accountability Office published a report on the impact of the minimum wage increases, namely, changes in employment, earnings and key industries since the most recent federal minimum wage increase in 2009 and since the increases began in 2007. The main findings set out in that report were reflected throughout the previous working paper (A/AC.109/2015/12).

20. According to the United States Department of Labor, American Samoa has separate minimum wages for 18 industries (as at 30 September 2015), currently ranging from $4.58 (garment manufacturing) to $5.99 (stevedoring, lighterage and maritime shipping agency activities) per hour. The tuna canning industry, the largest source of private sector employment in the Territory, has a current minimum wage of $5.16 per hour and employs mostly foreign labour from neighbouring Samoa. There is currently one operating cannery and an additional fish company has begun limited operations.

21. In January 2016, the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the United States Department of Commerce released the gross domestic product (GDP) estimates for the Territory for 2014 and estimates of GDP and compensation by industry for 2013. The estimates of GDP for American Samoa showed that real GDP had increased by 1.6 per cent in 2014. The growth in the economy of the Territory reflected widespread increases in the GDP components. Growth in private fixed investment and in exports of goods reflected the increased activity of the tuna canning industry, including the construction of a large tuna processing plant. The increase in exports of goods was due to the growth in exports of canned tuna.

22. In November 2014, the Territorial Economic Development Implementation Task Force submitted a comprehensive platform for the Territory entitled "Economic development implementation plan for American Samoa, 2014-2017". The plan focused on the following areas: transportation services and infrastructure, new business and industry, federal government constraints and business climate, agriculture, tourism, fisheries and workforce development.

23. According to the Department of Commerce of the Government of American Samoa, during the period from 2007 to 2012, exports remained significantly higher than import totals. Canned tuna accounted for more than 95 per cent of total exports for all six years. American Samoa currently exports to the United States. Imports, however, are shipped to the Territory from diverse trading partners that include the United States, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand.

B. Fisheries and agriculture

24. According to the report of the United States Government Accountability Office (see para. 18), cannery officials stated that wage increases were among the factors affecting the tuna canning industry in American Samoa and that labour costs, including the minimum wage increases, placed the Territory at a significant cost disadvantage, compared with canned tuna exporting countries.

25. Almost 90 per cent of all farms in the Territory operate on a subsistence basis. Prospects for agricultural development continue to be limited because much of the land is volcanic and mountainous and only a small amount of level land is suitable for cultivation. Farmers benefit from assistance provided by the Natural Resources

Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture and its environmental quality incentives programme.

C. Tourism

26. The American Samoa statistical yearbook for 2013, published by the Department of Commerce of American Samoa, found that the United States continued to be the primary tourism market for the Territory, holding 51 per cent of the market share, followed by New Zealand with 34 per cent, Australia with 11 per cent and other countries with the remaining 4 per cent.

D. Transport and communications

27. There are approximately 180 km of public and primary paved roads and 235 km of secondary village roads in American Samoa. Pago Pago harbour, an all-weather deep-draught harbour, has a main dock that is 1,000 feet long, handling ships of up to a 32-foot draught. The harbour provides the full complement of equipment and facilities. The ship repair facility features a 3,000-ton marine railway.

28. The four airports in the Territory are situated on the islands of Tutuila, Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u. Pago Pago International Airport is owned and operated by the territorial Government. It is regularly served by a number of airlines that link American Samoa with Hawaii and the continental United States, in addition to countries in the South Pacific. Within the Territory, regular flights to Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u are also available.

29. The Territory's air transport service to and from the United States is severely restricted by United States cabotage laws that prohibit foreign carriers from transporting passengers between American Samoa and other parts of the United States, according to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy document.

30. The Territory has three FM radio stations and three AM radio stations, serving some 57,000 radios. One government-owned television station broadcasts more than three channels to approximately 14,000 television sets. Internet access is provided by the American Samoa Telecommunications Authority, a semi-autonomous government agency.

E. Water, sanitation system and utilities

31. The American Samoa Power Authority provides water, wastewater, solid-waste and electricity services to customers on five of the seven islands. It provides drinking water to 90 per cent of the Territory from wells, with the remaining 10 per cent being serviced by outer-village systems.

32. According to the United States Energy Information Administration, American Samoa is nearly 100 per cent dependent on imported fossil fuels, including diesel fuel, for electric power generation. Electricity prices in American Samoa varied between three and four times the United States average in 2014. A significant amount of its electricity is used to pump and treat drinking water. The American

Samoa Power Authority owns and operates two generating plants and the electric grid on Tutuila, plus two other small generating plants and grids serving the Manu'a group. The Authority also provides drinking water and wastewater treatment. In September 2009, an earthquake and tsunami destroyed the Satala generating plant, reducing generating capacity on Tutuila by half. Generators burning ultra-low-sulphur diesel temporarily replaced those destroyed in 2009. A 24.5-mw replacement plant, with high-efficiency diesel generating sets, is scheduled for completion in 2016. With the Territory's high cost of electricity and geographic isolation, the Government has established a renewable energy committee to work with federal experts to bring sustainable renewable energy to the islands. The committee has developed energy strategies to explore wind, solar, photovoltaic and geothermal potential on Tutuila and is considering the feasibility of supplying the grids of the tiny Manu'a islands completely with renewable energy.

IV. Social conditions

A. General

33. Known as *fa'asamoa*, the Samoan way of life is based on the notion of mutual respect and sharing among the *aiga* (extended families), each featuring a common allegiance to a *matai* (chief), and it influences every aspect of the socioeconomic fabric of the Territory. Since 2008, the legislature has been working to further strengthen the use of the Samoan language in public schools, in tandem with English.

34. In 2011, the Pacific office of the United Nations Children's Fund and the secretariat of the Pacific Community published *The State of Pacific Youth 2011: Opportunities and Obstacles*, a report highlighting significant problems facing young people in the Pacific, including American Samoa, such as the high number of teenage pregnancies, the high proportion of female teenagers who are raped (26 per cent) and alcohol abuse.

35. According to the American Samoa statistical yearbook for 2013, 57.8 per cent of the population, or 54.4 per cent of families, were below the United States poverty level in 2010. Almost 18 per cent of families are headed by a single female.

B. Labour and immigration

36. According to the report of the United States Government Accountability Office (see para. 19), employment and earnings in American Samoa have decreased since 2007, but employment increased slightly from 2011 to 2012. Tax data, combined with questionnaire data of the Office, showed that the total number of employees in American Samoa increased by 1.5 per cent from 2011 to 2012 (from 15,552 to 15,790). However, from 2007 to 2012, employment declined by 11 per cent.

37. American Samoa has its own immigration laws and conditions for entry to the Territory, which are not the same as those applicable to the United States. As previously reported, a new immigration law for American Samoa has entered into force, giving the Attorney General, rather than a government-appointed board, full

authority over the granting of permanent resident status. In the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy document, it was reported that local control of immigration was an important advantage to American Samoa, especially in view of its limited labour force skill range and the need to bring in skilled workers and management for many industries. It recommended revising the immigration law, policy and procedures to better accommodate business labour requirements and expressed concern that local immigration and customs control in American Samoa could be federalized, a scenario that could have very severe adverse effects on the local labour market.

C. Education

38. Education in American Samoa is compulsory for those between 6 and 18 years of age. The education system is broadly based on that of the United States. A total of 95.7 per cent of the student population is from American Samoa, whereas 4.3 per cent of students are from China, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and other Pacific islands.

39. American Samoa has a literacy rate of approximately 97 per cent. There are five school districts, each centred on a high school together with lower-level elementary or "feeder schools". The Department of Education of American Samoa comprises 22 early childhood education centres, 22 elementary schools and six high schools. It serves more than 15,531 students from kindergarten to grade 12, early childhood education and special education programmes. It has 563 teachers in elementary education, 248 in secondary education, 18 in vocational education, 202 in special education and 118 in early childhood education.

D. Public health

40. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) country cooperation strategy for American Samoa for the period 2013-2017, the most serious health issues are related to the increase in chronic and non-communicable diseases, owing to improper nutrition and physical inactivity. Significant increases have been seen in obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, cerebrovascular diseases, diabetes mellitus and its complications, arthritis and some forms of cancer.

41. Some 16 per cent of the budget of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Tropical Medical Center comes from the federal Government, and most of the funds are used to purchase medical supplies. Vaccines and pharmaceuticals are purchased in the United States, given that the Food and Drug Administration prohibits the purchase of medicines elsewhere. Logistical and financial factors cause frequent scarcity problems.

42. According to WHO, the morbidity pattern has fundamentally changed over the past three decades, with an increase in non-communicable diseases stemming from modernization and lifestyle changes. Inappropriate nutrition and physical inactivity are the leading causes of significant increases in obesity in both sexes, especially young people.

E. Crime and public safety

43. The Territory has continued to enhance cooperation with the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police organization and the United States Department of Justice through its Office of Territorial and International Criminal Intelligence and Drug Enforcement.

44. In 2012, it was announced that all Federal Bureau of Investigation operations and investigative efforts in American Samoa would be handled by the Bureau's office in Honolulu, Hawaii. The decision for the consolidation was made by the United States Congress for budgetary reasons.

V. Environmental protection and disaster preparedness

45. The American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency, funded by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, is mandated to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment, in particular air, water and land.

46. American Samoa faces the problem, common to the South Pacific, of the safe disposal of solid and liquid waste, in particular as a result of urbanization. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, point source pollution from industrial waste and sewage, inappropriately sited and poorly managed garbage dumps and the disposal of toxic chemicals is a significant contributor to marine pollution and coastal degradation. There is growing concern that toxic and hazardous waste may be brought to the region from developed countries for disposal.

VI. Relations with international organizations and partners

47. American Samoa has been an associate member of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific since 1988. International labour conventions and recommendations are applicable to it. The Territory belongs to various regional bodies of the United Nations system, including WHO, for which it falls under the auspices of the Regional Office for the Western Pacific, and the Western Pacific Regional Centre for the Promotion of Environmental Planning and Applied Studies.

48. American Samoa is a member of several regional organizations, including the Pacific Community, the Pacific Basin Development Council, the Pacific Tuna Development Foundation, the Pacific Islands Association of Non-governmental Organizations, the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education, the Pacific Asia Travel Association and the Pacific Regional Environment Programme. The Territory participates in the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission and the Pacific Community Coastal Fisheries Programme. American Samoa also belongs to United States organizations, such as the National Governors Association and the Western Governors' Association. The Government of American Samoa has signed memorandums of understanding with the Governments of Samoa and Tonga on mutual economic cooperation and has sent trade missions to countries in the Pacific region. American Samoa hosted the seventh Pacific water conference and expo of the Pacific Water and Wastes Association from 9 to 11 September 2014.

49. The Territory also holds observer status with the Pacific Islands Forum and the Alliance of Small Island States.

VII. Future status of the Territory

A. Position of the territorial Government

50. Section I of the present working paper reflects recent developments in American Samoa concerning its future political status.

B. Position of the administering Power

51. In a letter dated 2 November 2006 addressed to the delegate of American Samoa to the United States House of Representatives, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs, Jeffrey T. Bergner, set forth the position of the Government of the United States on the status of American Samoa and other United States insular areas. He indicated that the status of the insular areas regarding their political relations with the federal Government was an internal United States issue and not one that came under the purview of the Special Committee. He also stated that the Special Committee had no authority to alter in any way the relationship between the United States and those territories and had no mandate to engage the United States in negotiations on their status. He further stated that, at the same time, in accordance with its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to provide regularly to the United Nations statistical and other information of a technical nature relating to the economic, social and educational conditions in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the federal Government submitted annual updates on United States territories to the Special Committee as a demonstration of the cooperation of the United States as an administering Power and to correct any errors in information that the Special Committee might have received from other sources.

VIII. Action taken by the General Assembly

52. On 9 December 2015, the General Assembly adopted resolutions 70/102 A and B without a vote, on the basis of the report of the Special Committee (A/70/23) and the subsequent recommendation by the Fourth Committee. Section I of resolution 70/102 B concerns American Samoa. In that section, the Assembly:

(a) Welcomed the work of the territorial Government with respect to moving forward on political status, local autonomy and self-governance issues with a view to making political and economic progress and in particular the announcement of a dialogue among the people of American Samoa on the Territory's future political status;

(b) Acknowledged the indication by the territorial Government that American Samoa should remain on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, under the purview of the Special Committee, until such time as its people have exercised their right to self-determination;

(c) Expressed its appreciation for the invitation extended in 2015 by the Governor of American Samoa to the Special Committee to send a visiting mission to the Territory, called upon the administering Power to facilitate such a mission if the territorial Government so desired, and requested the Chair of the Special Committee to take all the steps necessary to that end;

(d) Requested the administering Power to assist the Territory by facilitating its work concerning a public awareness programme, consistent with Article 73 b of the Charter of the United Nations, and in that regard called upon the relevant United Nations organizations to provide assistance to the Territory, if requested;

(e) Called upon the administering Power to assist the territorial Government in the diversification and sustainability of the economy of the Territory and to address employment and cost-of-living issues.